Colorado River Hydrologic Region

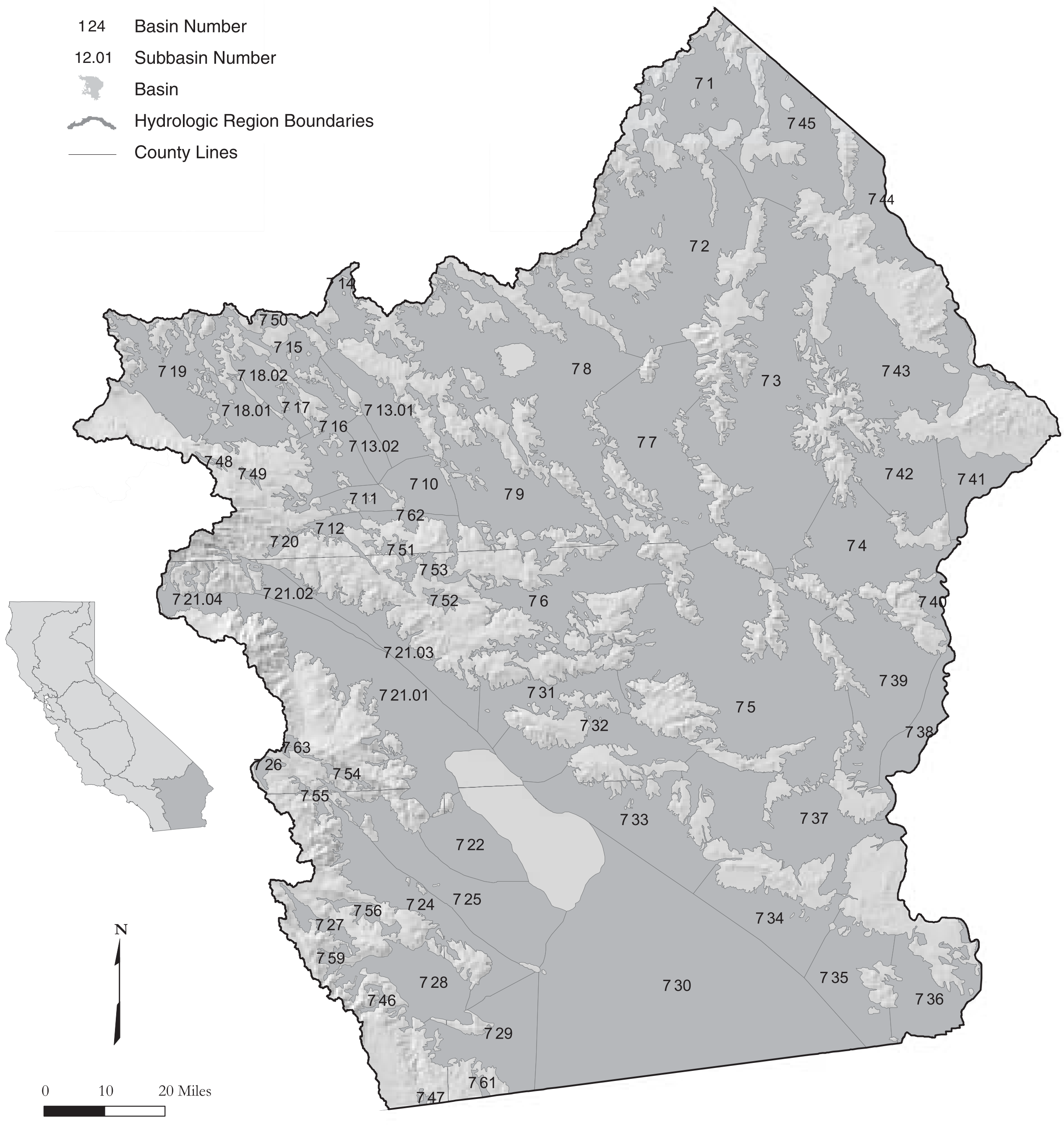

Figure 43 Colorado River Hydrologic Region

Basins and Subbasins of Colorado River Hydrologic Region

Basin/subbasin		Basin name
7-1		Lanfair Valley
7-2		Fenner Valley
7-3		Ward Valley
7-4		Rice Valley
7-5		Chuckwalla Valley
7-6		Pinto Valley
7-7		Cadiz Valley
7-8		Bristol Valley
7-9		Dale Valley
7-10		Twentynine Palms Valley
7-11		Copper Mountain Valley
7-12		Warren Valley
7-13		Deadman Valley
	7-13.01	Deadman Lake
	7-13.02	Surprise Spring
7-14		Lavic Valley
7-15		Bessemer Valley
7-16		Ames Valley
7-17		Means Valley
7-18		Johnson Valley Area
	7-18.01	Soggy Lake
	7-18.02	Upper Johnson Valley
7-19		Lucerne Valley
7-20		Morongo Valley
7-21		Coachella Valley
	7-21.01	Indio
	7-21.02	Mission Creek
	7-21.03	Desert Hot Springs
	7-21.04	San Gorgonio Pass
7-22		West Salton Sea
7-24		Borrego Valley
7-25		Ocotillo-Clark Valley
7-26		Terwilliger Valley
7-27		San Felipe Valley
7-28		Vallecito-Carrizo Valley
7-29		Coyote Wells Valley
7-30		Imperial Valley
7-31		Orocopia Valley
7-32		Chocolate Valley
7-33		East Salton Sea
7-34		Amos Valley
7-35		Ogilby Valley

Basin/subbasin	Basin name
7-36	Yuma Valley
7-37	Arroyo Seco Valley
7-38	Palo Verde Valley
7-39	Palo Verde Mesa
7-40	Quien Sabe Point Valley
7-41	Calzona Valley
7-42	Vidal Valley
7-43	Chemehuevi Valley
7-44	Needles Valley
7-45	Piute Valley
7-46	Canebrake Valley
7-47	Jacumba Valley
7-48	Helendale Fault Valley
7-49	Pipes Canyon Fault Valley
7-50	Iron Ridge Area
7-51	Lost Horse Valley
7-52	Pleasant Valley
7-53	Hexie Mountain Area
7-54	Buck Ridge Fault Valley
7-55	Collins Valley
7-56	Yaqui Well Area
7-59	Mason Valley
7-61	Davies Valley
7-62	Joshua Tree
7-63	Vandeventer Flat

Description of the Region

The Colorado River HR covers approximately 13 million acres (20,000 square miles) in southeastern California. It is bounded on the east by Nevada and Arizona, the south by the Republic of Mexico, the west by the Laguna, San Jacinto, and San Bernardino mountains, and the north by the New York, Providence, Granite, Old Dad, Bristol, Rodman, and Ord Mountain ranges. An average annual precipitation of 5.5 inches and average annual runoff of only 200,000 acre-feet makes this the most arid HR of California (DWR 1994). Surface runoff drains to many closed basins or to the Colorado River.

This HR includes all of Imperial, most of Riverside, much of San Bernardino, and part of San Diego counties (Figure 43). Many of the alluvial valleys in the region are underlain by groundwater aquifers that are the sole source of water for local communities.

About 533,000 people live within the Colorado River HR (DWR, 1998). The largest population centers are Palm Springs, Palm Desert, Indio, Coachella, and El Centro.

Groundwater Development

The earliest groundwater development in California may have been prehistoric water wells dug by the Cahuilla Indians in Coachella Valley of the Colorado River HR. In this report, 64 groundwater basins/ subbasins are delineated in this HR. The Deadman Valley, Johnson Valley Area, and Coachella Valley groundwater basins have been divided into subbasins. Groundwater basins underlie about 8.68 million acres or about 26 percent of this HR.

In the Colorado River HR, groundwater provides about 8 percent of the water supply in normal years for agricultural and urban uses (DWR 1998). In most smaller basins, groundwater is found in unconfined alluvial aquifers. In some of the larger basins, particularly near dry lakes, aquifers may be separated by aquitards that create confined groundwater conditions. Depths of basins range from tens or hundreds of feet in smaller basins and along arms of ephemeral rivers to thousands of feet in larger basins. The thickness of aquifers varies from tens to hundreds of feet. Well yields vary in this region depending on aquifer characteristics and well location, size, and use. Some aquifers are capable of yielding thousands of gallons per minute to municipal wells.

Conjunctive use of surface water and groundwater is a long-standing practice in the region. Water is imported from the Colorado River for irrigation in Imperial, Coachella, and Palo Verde Valleys and from groundwater recharge in Coachella Valley. Water imported from Northern California is used to replenish Warren and Joshua Tree groundwater basins. Many agencies have erected systems of barriers to allow more efficient percolation of ephemeral runoff from surrounding mountains. The concept of utilizing groundwater basins in this sparsely populated HR for storing water that would be pumped during drought years is getting much attention.

Groundwater Quality

The chemical character of groundwater in the Colorado River HR is variable. Cation concentration is dominated by sodium with calcium common and magnesium appearing less often. Bicarbonate is usually the dominant anion, although sulfate and chloride waters are also common. In basins with closed drainages, water character often changes from calcium-sodium bicarbonate near the margins to sodium chloride or chloride-sulfate beneath a dry lake. It is not uncommon for concentrations of dissolved constituents to rise dramatically toward a dry lake where saturation of mineral salts is reached. An example of this is found at Bristol Valley Groundwater Basin, where the mineral halite (sodium chloride) is formed and then mined by evaporation of groundwater in trenches in Bristol (dry) Lake. The TDS content of groundwater is high in many of the basins in this region. High fluoride content is common; sulfate content occasionally exceeds drinking water standards; and high nitrate content is common, especially in agricultural areas.

Two of the primary challenges in the Colorado River HR are overdraft in the Coachella Valley and leaking underground storage tanks. The EPA has not yet placed any contamination sites in this HR on the Superfund National Priorities List; however, one site is under consideration because of high pesticide levels.

Water Quality in Public Supply Wells

From 1994 through 2000, 314 public supply water wells were sampled in 23 of the 64 basins and subbasins in the Colorado River HR. Analyzed samples indicate that 270 wells, or 86 percent, met the state primary MCLs for drinking water standards. Forty-four wells, or 14 percent, have constituents that exceed one or more MCL. Figure 44 shows the percentages of each contaminant group that exceeded MCLs in the 44 wells.

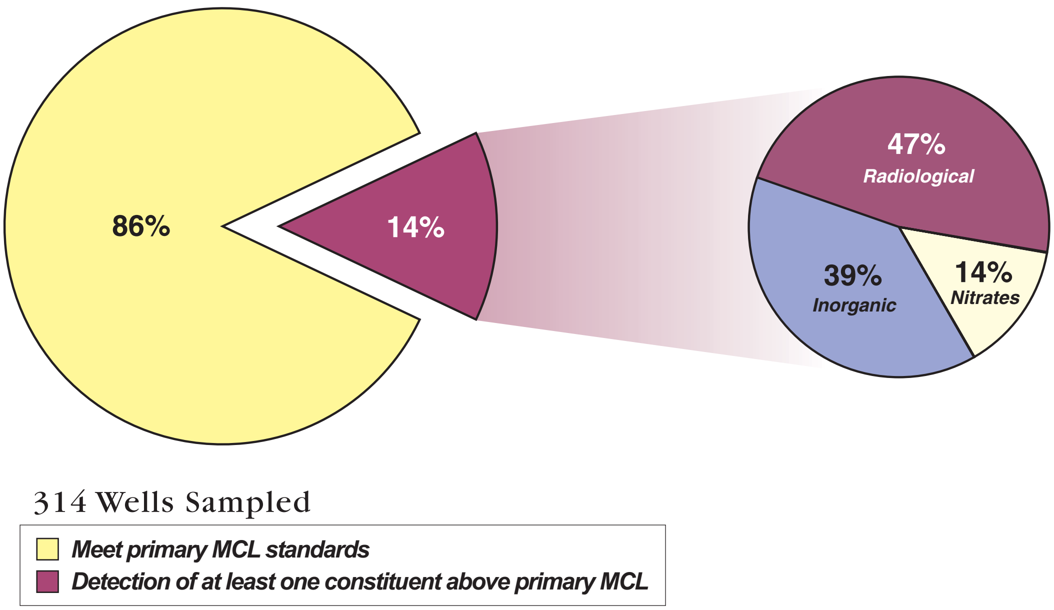

Figure 44 MCL exceedances in public supply wells in the Colorado River Hydrologic Region

Table 39 lists the three most frequently occurring contaminants in each contaminant group and shows the number of wells in the HR that exceeded the MCL for those contaminants.

Table 39 Most frequently occurring contaminants by contaminant group in the Colorado River Hydrologic Region

Contaminant group	Contaminant - # of wells	Contaminant - # of wells	Contaminant - # of wells
Inorganics – Primary	Fluoride – 17		
Inorganics – Secondary	Iron – 38	Manganese – 26	TDS – 5
Radiological	Radium 228 – 3	Combined RA226 + RA228 – 3	Radium 226 – 1
Nitrates	Nitrate (as NO_3) – 6	Nitrate + Nitrite – 1	

Changes from Bulletin 118-80

Several modifications from the groundwater basins presented in Bulletin 118-80 are incorporated in this report (Table 40). Jacumba Valley East Groundwater Basin (7-60) has been deleted because of lack of information about groundwater in this basin. The Pinyon Wash Area (7-57) and Whale Peak Area (7-58) groundwater basin names have been deleted because they are now incorporated into other larger basins. Similarly, Clark Valley (7-23) and Ocotillo Valley (7-25) groundwater basins are now the combined Ocotillo-Clark Valley Groundwater Basin (7-25). The Deadman Valley (7-13), Johnson Valley Area (7-18), and Coachella Valley (7-21) groundwater basins have been subdivided into subbasins in this report. The western boundary of Lucerne Valley Groundwater Basin (7-19) has been moved eastward from the HR boundary to the Helendale fault. Groundwater level elevations indicate that this fault is a groundwater barrier and that groundwater flows westward back under the surface divide into the Upper Mojave River Groundwater Basin (6-42). The boundary between Lucerne Valley (7-19) and Johnson Valley Area (7-18) groundwater basins is delineated in this report.

The boundaries of Twentynine Palms Valley (7-10), Copper Mountain Valley (7-11), Warren Valley (7-12), Deadman Lake (7-13), and Ames Valley (7-16) groundwater basins have been redrawn in light of newer groundwater level data. These data indicate that the Pinto Mountain fault is a groundwater barrier. Joshua Tree Groundwater Basin (7-62) is a new basin that has been delineated from parts of Copper Mountain Valley and Twentynine Palms Valley Groundwater Basins because the Pinto Mountain fault is such a strong barrier. Buck Ridge Fault Valley Groundwater Basin (7-54) was presented in Bulletin 118-80 as two unconnected deposits of water-bearing alluvium separated by outcrop of nonwater-bearing rocks. These water-bearing deposits have been designated as separate groundwater basins in this report, with the Buck Ridge Fault Valley Groundwater Basin (7-54) as the northern basin and Vandeventer Flat Groundwater Basin (7-63) presented as the southern basin.

Table 40 Modifications since Bulletin 118-80 of groundwater basins in Colorado River Hydrologic Region

Basin name	New number	Old number
Clark Valley	Delete – combined with 7-25	7-23
Ocotillo-Clark Valley	7-25 (now combined)	7-25
Pinyon Wash Area	Incorporated into 7-56	7-57
Whale Peak Area	Incorporated into 7-28	7-58
Jacumba Valley East	Deleted	7-60
Joshua Tree	7-62 (new)	
Vandeventer Flat	7-63 (new)	

Table 41 Colorado River Hydrologic Region groundwater data

Basin/Subbasin	Basin Name	Area (acres)	Groundwater Budget Type	Well Yields (gpm)		Types of Monitoring			TDS (mg/L)	
				Maximum	Average	Levels	Quality	Title 22	Average	Range
7-1	LANFAIR VALLEY	157,000	C	70	16	-	-	9	515	173-2,260
7-2	FENNER VALLEY	454,000	A	200	100	-	-	4	515	173-2,260
7-3	WARD VALLEY	961,000	A	260	180	-	-	1	-	327-589
7-4	RICE VALLEY	189,000	C	65	-	-	-	-	-	-
7-5	CHUCKWALLA VALLEY	604,000	C	3,900	1,800	12	-	10	-	424
7-6	PINTO VALLEY	183,000	A	1,480	900	-	-	1	-	-
7-7	CADIZ VALLEY	270,000	C	167	66	-	-	-	400	300-3000
7-8	BRISTOL VALLEY	498,000	A	3,000	-	-	-	-		300-298,000
7-9	DALE VALLEY	213,000	C	380	275	-	-	2	-	-
7-10	TWENTYNINE PALMS VALLEY	62,400	C	3,000	540	27	-	2	640	-
7-11	COPPER MOUNTAIN VALLEY	30,300	A	2,450	250	2	-	2	-	180-214
7-12	WARREN VALLEY	17,200	A	4,000	350	27	18	17	196	129-269
7-13	DEADMAN VALLEY									
7-13.01	DEADMAN LAKE	89,200	C	2,000	-	28	3	1	-	311-985
7-13.02	SURPRISE SPRING	29,300	C	1,370	680	26	6	9	177	141-1,050
7-14	LAVIC VALLEY	102,000	C	140	80	-	-	-	-	-
7-15	BESSEMER VALLEY	39,100	C	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
7-16	AMES VALLEY	110,000	C	2,000	-	19	3	11	459	-
7-17	MEANS VALLEY	15,000	C	0	-	1	-	-	-	-
7-18	JOHNSON VALLEY AREA									
7-18.01	SOGGY LAKE	76,800	C	-	-	6	-	1	-	300-2,000
7-18.02	UPPER JOHNSON VALLEY	34,800	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,000
7-19	LUCERNE VALLEY	148,000	A	1,000	-	22	9	21	301	200-5,000
7-20	MORONGO VALLEY	7,240	C	600	90	-	-	5	-	-
7-21	COACHELLA VALLEY									
7-21.01	INDIO	336,000	A	1,880	650	30	-	204	300	-
7-21.02	MISSION CREEK	49,000	A	3,500	715	5	-	15	<500	-
7-21.03	DESERT HOT SPRINGS	101,000	C	2,500	985	10	-	2	-	800-1,000
7-21.04	SAN GORGONIO PASS	38,700	A	1,000	0	17	8	5	-	106-205
7-22	WEST SALTON SEA	106,000	C	540	400	v	-	-	-	-
7-24	BORREGO VALLEY	153,000	A	2,000	0	10	10	25	-	300-2,440
7-25	OCOTILLO-CLARK VALLEY	223,000	C	3,500	1,760	1	-	2	-	-
7-26	TERWILLIGER VALLEY	8,030	C	100	-	-	-	1	-	500
7-27	SAN FELIPE VALLEY	2,340	C	500	30	-	-	1	-	-
7-28	VALLECITO-CARRIZO VALLEY	122,000	C	2,500	260	-	-	1	-	-
7-29	COYOTE WELLS VALLEY	146,000	A	-	-	25	6	9	-	-
7-30	IMPERIAL VALLEY	961,000	A	1,000	-	19	-	45	1088	498-7,280
7-31	OROCOPIA VALLEY	96,500	A	210	165	0	-	1	-	-
7-32	CHOCOLATE VALLEY	130,000	C	0	0	0	-	-	-	-
7-33	EAST SALTON SEA	196,000	C	0	0	1	-	4	-	-
7-34	AMOS VALLEY	130,000	C	100	50	3	-	1	-	-
7-35	OGILBY VALLEY	134,000	C	4,000	50	27	1	3	-	-

Table 41 Colorado River Hydrologic Region groundwater data (continued)

				Well Yields (gpm)		Types of Monitoring			TDS (mg/L)	
Basin/Subbasin	Basin Name	Area (acres)	Groundwater Budget Type	Maximum	Average	Levels	Quality	Title 22	Average	Range
7-36	YUMA VALLEY	3,780	C	100	40	59	0	15	-	-
7-37	ARROYO SECO VALLEY	258,000	C	-	-	2	0	0	-	-
7-38	PALO VERDE VALLEY	73,400	A	-	-	11	-	19	840	658-1,030
7-39	PALO VERDE MESA	226,000	C	2,750	1,650	20	-	13	-	-
7-40	QUIEN SABE POINT VALLEY	25,300	C	25	-	-	-	3	-	-
7-41	CALZONA VALLEY	81,000	C	2,340	500	0	0	0	-	
7-42	VIDAL VALLEY	138,000	C	1,800	675	-	-	1	-	-
7-43	CHEMEHUEVI VALLEY	273,000	A	0	0	1	0	1	-	-
7-44	NEEDLES VALLEY	88,400	A	1,500	980	34	-	11	-	-
7-45	PIUTE VALLEY	176,000	C	1,500	200	-	-	-	-	-
7-46	CANEBRAKE VALLEY	5,420	C	125	-	-	-	-	-	-
7-47	JACUMBA VALLEY	2,450	A	1,000	-	-	-	3		296-6,100
7-48	HELENDALE FAULT VALLEY	2,620	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7-49	PIPES CANYON FAULT VALLEY	3,390	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7-50	IRON RIDGE AREA	5,250	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7-51	LOST HORSE VALLEY	17,300	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7-52	PLEASANT VALLEY	9,670	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7-53	HEXIE MOUNTAIN AREA	11,200	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7-54	BUCK RIDGE FAULT VALLEY	6,930	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7-55	COLLINS VALLEY	7,080	C	1,500	-	-	-	-	-	-
7-56	YAQUI WELL AREA	15,000	C	0	-	-	-	1	-	-
7-59	MASON VALLEY	5,530	C	0	0	0	0	1	-	-
7-61	DAVIES VALLEY	3,570	C	0	0	0	0	-	-	-
7-62	JOSHUA TREE	33,800	A	2,200	1,110	25	5	14	180	117-185
7-63	VANDEVENTER FLAT	6,750	C	50	17	-	-	-	-	-

gpm - gallons per minute
mg/L - milligram per liter
TDS -total dissolved solids